

TESTIMONY OF JEANNE WEBB – APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD, CT

March 11, 2010

I am speaking today against the elimination of HOMECONNECTICUT funding.

The Town of East Hartford has undertaken a study to create "HOUSING FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH". This is intended to be utilized as a tool for historic housing preservation, repositioning areas of town that are deteriorating and educating our town policymakers and residents about the types of housing that will provide for economic growth opportunities in the future.

East Hartford has the largest percentage of vacant retail space in the region. East Hartford was one of the first towns in this region to build out retail plaza's in the 1950's and 60's. These areas were once regional shopping centers. As our new highway systems were developed, changes were made that left our properties no longer prime for retail development. There are a number of vacant properties in the Silver Lane corridor that are ripe for innovative new development.

East Hartford also contains four delineated National Register Historic Districts, with 1100 individual structures studied and on record with the State of Connecticut. Our Historic Districts reflect the character of an 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural community with roots in international trade. Tobacco was an internationally traded commodity in the 18 and 19 centuries. Our mills are also some of the oldest still operating in New England and represent the industrial past of water driven product manufacturing.

The goal of our program is to maintain the character of our older neighborhoods while providing safe and affordable housing for our residents. We are developing three incentive zones that will target 326 housing units (3% of the towns housing units) for reinvestment over the next five years.

This is not possible without additional pre-development funding. The incentives that have been made available through OPM are essential for demolition, architectural and engineering work that will assure that the types of developments that meet the state's needs and the town's needs are in fact feasible.

- East Hartford's median income is \$50,714. According to HUD, 80 percent of the AMI for the Hartford Region is \$68,080. If housing costs account for 30 percent of household income, \$1,702 a month is the maximum affordable gross rental rate for these households at 80 percent of AMI. In 2008, East Hartford's median gross rental rate was \$823 a month, which shows that the rental units in East Hartford are already affordable to households making 80 percent of the Regional AMI.

- Slightly more than half of East Hartford's housing units are owner-occupied, a similar percentage as Manchester and Hartford County, but lower than percentage of owner-occupied units in both South Windsor and Glastonbury.
- 88 % of homes in East Hartford meet the regional affordability profile.
- The number of residential units in East Hartford has experienced a slight growth since 1990, but in general has not fluctuated much in the last 20 years.
- East Hartford has an older housing stock, with 78 percent of the Town's residential structures built prior to 1970, and 32% built before 1949.
- Approximately 40 percent of East Hartford's households make at least 80 percent of the Area Median Income for the Hartford Region, compared to about 50 percent in Manchester and almost 75 percent in Glastonbury and South Windsor.
- East Hartford has seen a decline in the number of households since 2000 and is projected to experience an even larger loss of households by 2014.
- East Hartford has the highest percentage of households with single mothers living with their children compared to Glastonbury, South Windsor and Manchester.
- The service industry dominates the labor force in East Hartford, followed by retail trade, finance/insurance/real estate, and manufacturing. 6% of the regions at place employment is in East Hartford. There are 32,055 jobs in East Hartford larger than any adjacent town.
- The highest number of East Hartford employees work in wholesale trade, followed by services and retail trade. East Hartford has a significantly higher percentage of wholesale trade employees than South Windsor, Glastonbury or Manchester.
- East Hartford has a higher percentage of blue-collar jobs than South Windsor, Glastonbury, and Manchester, illustrating the Town's working-class population.